

175 Sanusi against the Italians in Cyrenaica. "When the British
648 reached Matruh, they jailed all of the 'umdas and shaikhs
554 (two 'umdas and five shaikhs, at that time). Then they chose
631 new leaders, from the families of the old leaders, to work
with them." But, "these men did not fight with the British,
they only acted as their guides in dealing with the Bedouins
of the desert. When the old leaders were released from jail,
they returned to their positions of political office. While
they were in jail, their replacements had only helped the
British with supplies." Apparently, the British saw the need
[178] of maintaining the continuity of the Bedouin authority structure.

175 Data on the condition of the Bedouins of the Western
648 Desert between the two world wars are absent. The Bedouins
say that they lived with no trouble, or any help, from the
Egyptians. The Bedouins have no fond memories of their
experiences during World War II. They first heard of the war
in 1940 when the Italians marched into Western Desert from
Libya. The Germans occupied al-Qasr from May to October of
1942, when the famous General Rommel had his headquarters at
Marsa Matruh. The British had told the Bedouins, in 1940,
that they should flee the Italians, and that unless they did
they would be held responsible for their actions. Most of the
175 people of al-Qasr agreed to go to refugee camps at Amriyya
648 near Alexandria for the duration of the war.
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[556]

Some of the Bedouins refused to leave for Amriyya.

175 These were the wealthy group who had large numbers of sheep
648 and camels. In fact, most of the animals taken east to
722 Amriyya died on the way or were expropriated by the British.
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• 166 'Umran Kailani, "who owned one thousand camels" and was the
shaikh of the 'Ali Ahmar section of the Awlad 'Ali at the time,
refused to go to Amriyya. The Bedouins say that he was treated
very well by the Germans who asked him to form a local govern-
ment and promised him all the help and supplies that he
needed. It is difficult to obtain figures on how many Bedouins
made the migration to the Nile Valley and how many remained
behind in the Al-Qasr area. One informant told me that before
[162] the war there were about 80,000 members of the Awlad 'Ali in
the Western Desert and that out of this number, about 30,000
remained behind.

175 Those who sought refuge at Amriyya returned to the
648 al-Qasr area at the end of 1942 after the defeat of the Germans
727 at al-Alamain. They found things greatly changed. Before the
war, there had been about twenty buildings in the al-Qasr area
and most of these were bombed out by the air war. The loss of
animals and the damage to the land made the resumption of
normal life quite difficult for the Bedouins. Underneath,
the land was literally a bed of anti-tank and anti-personnel
mines left by the advance and retreat of three different
armies. This restricted Bedouin travel and everyday food-
648 getting activities. This condition, which still exists, has
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History of Settlement in al-Qasr

173 The settlement of al-Qasr took place about 200 years
• [166] ago when the Awlad 'Ali first came to the area from Cyrenaica.
[175] No historical documentation for this period exists. The
173 various versions which the Bedouins offer are both vague and
* 613 ethnocentric with reference to lineage. A point of consensus
[112] is that the zone was first claimed by Abu Mahjuba who built
a large fort (qasr = "fort" or "castle") near the coast. The
Bedouins say that Abu Mahjuba settled in the area of al-Qasr
because "he knew good land when he saw it." He belonged to
no one lineage, "he was 'Aishaibi only." All of the lineages
of al-Qasr claim that their ancestors came with Abu Mahjuba
and settled on the land at that time. Abu Mahjuba has been
mythologized: he belongs to all of al-Qasr, a symbol of
local group solidarity and fraternal equality.

173 Al-Qasr represents the end of nomadic life for the
361 'Aishaibat tribe. According to the Bedouins, each tribe and
[198] lineage took that part of al-Qasr which it preferred. If the
members of the segment wanted to grow vegetables, they took
land on the coast; if they preferred the "old way of life,"
they set up their tents in the sha'ir wi mar'a area and raised
sheep. "Everything was fine," they say, "there were no land
registration laws--a man was free." Al-Qasr was settled
[619] "after the wars" (with the Hanadi), and it was only then that
the Awlad 'Ali broke up into tribes. The 'Aishaibat took the

245 blossoms of the tree are stripped away by these winds before
177 the fruit can mature.

178 Traditional values affect the Bedouins' perception of
517 their new life. Men are fond of gathering for their ritual
272 three cups of mint tea and recalling "the good old days." In
[829] those days, they say, men only had to ride, shoot, and drink
233 tea. In the past, there was a great deal of security in
178 owning animals which are not as dependent on the rains as
422 is agriculture. During a year of bad rains, a Bedouin could
233 always move his flock to Libya or to the Nile Valley: "When
731 we have a bad year, we take our animals to the grass of our
• 166 relatives. When they have a bad year, they come here." In
167 the drought year of 1960, 20,000 Egyptian Bedouins migrated
[648] to Libya in search of pasturage. This caused an international
conflict and King Idris of Libya, for a short time, closed the
border to Bedouins. The conflict was finally resolved, and
the Bedouins were given permission to use the pastures of
Cyrenaica. None of the Bedouins of al-Qasr were involved in
this movement.

233 The Bedouins who have settled in the 'izba sector of
al-Qasr also prefer to keep some sheep. The security which
they represent is worth the time and expense of maintaining
233 them and paying a shepherd to look after them. The Bedouins,
178 in the past, paid their shepherds one sheep for every ten
465 sheep that he tended. Payment was made twice a year. Today,

407 the lack of spare parts. Three of the tractors were Russian-built, and two were Egyptian made. The Bedouins say that the Russian tractors are the better.

407 In 1964, the Western Desert received its heaviest
241 rainfall since 1947. To take advantage of this, local govern-
654 ment officials of the reclamation project requested an additional
[32] fifty tractors for plowing on the coastal zone. They received
only six additional tractors. In that year, the thirty-nine
tractors used in the entire Western Desert were able to plow
15,240 acres of land. During this period of economic change,
731 a bad barley crop causes a fodder shortage for the animals,
233 and seldom is the aid program able to compensate for this.
[654] Consequently, there is a need to ship sheep to the Nile Valley,
• [166] or to seek permission to take them to the pastures of Cyrenaica.
Both situations create tremendous difficulties for both the
Bedouins and the government. A third alternative for the
[432] Bedouin is to buy barley on the black-market. In doing this,
[435] he must pay six times the normal cost of grain, and risk
reprisals.

177 Prior to 1960, change in al-Qasr might be characterized
657 as a steady and endogenous process of sedentarization. It had
been taking place for about a century and a half. Exogenous
change, social and economic, may be identified with the desire
of the government to reclaim land in al-Qasr for agricultural
use, and to integrate the Bedouin into the national economy.

619 and the Marabit.
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* [613] The Qit'an tribe, based partly in Libya and partly in Egypt, is a tribe in the same sense that the Awlad 'Ali is one, i.e., at the secondary level of the lineage system.

• [166] This tribe moved into Egypt sometime around 1900. The
[175] Bedouins of al-Qasr estimate that "50% of the Qit'an are with Ali Namar, .30% with Sinaina, and 20% with Ali Abyad."

619 In 1956, certain events occurred in Libya which brought about
675 a declaration of independence from Sa'adi domination by the
598 Qit'an in that country. The Qit'an felt that their numbers were sufficiently large enough that they should represent themselves in the Libyan parliament. In other words, the Marabtin were no longer willing to settle for the traditional social categories and role structures allotted to them. After these events in Libya, some members of the Qit'an came to Egypt and informed their brothers about the formation of the tribe as a separate entity, and convinced the Egyptian Qit'an to do the same--which they did.

The Bedouins say that the Governor of Marsa Matruh encouraged the Qit'an tribe to increase their numbers in the area after he learned of their desire to be free from Sa'adi domination. There had been a small number of Qit'an in the town of Marsa Matruh. This number quickly grew in size and political strength so that it could challenge the power of the 'Ali Namar who are considered the dominant tribe in this

613 Written agreements such as the above are becoming more common in
675 the area. The need to have the responsibility of the vengeance group
[178] or the Amar recorded and the names of its members listed stems from the
[361] increase in the geographical mobility of individuals and separate house-
[464] holds seeking jobs with the government organizations in the area or with
the various industries in the towns and cities outside the Western Desert.
233 The uncertainty of pastoral nomadism and the delicate balance which exists
178 between pastures, animal population, and human population is pushing an
182 ever-increasing number of people to abandon the way of life which they
had lived for generations. Animals are extremely important to sustain
the pastoral life of Awlad Ali. Once the balance between the pasture and
233 the animal population is upset by a draught, a segment of the human popu-
182 lation has to make new adjustments. This adjustment is first made by
731 moving with one's flocks to areas in the Delta or in the Cyrenaica region
166 of Libya. This is a short-term adjustment, however, and cannot be con-
tinued for long periods of time. Pastures in the Delta have to be pur-
chased, and in most cases the owner of the herd has to sell part of his
herd to feed the rest. The Cyrenaica pasture is very limited and re-
[619] stricted by the strong tribal control of the Cyrenaica Bedouins, who in
general are not friendly with many of the tribal segments living in the
Egyptian Western Desert. If the draught continues beyond a certain time,
233 the individual owner of a herd may find himself forced to sell the herd
731 and seek other modes of subsistence in the form of part-time or full-time
464 employment as a semi-skilled or unskilled worker with the government or
434 industrial organizations. Such jobs are usually viewed as a temporary
182 source of income to help the individual and his immediate family live

613 usually has no difficulty collecting the individual shares. His own
682 financial ability is rarely called upon. When a member is unable to
[554] pay for any reason, his share is divided among the able members. However,
[178] in recent years this seems to be changing, especially among the baits
closely located to the settled communities or the urban centers. Among
these baits individual mobility has increased significantly with a large
613 number of younger members either leaving the area for the urban centers
178 or accepting salaried jobs with the government organizations. Among
166 certain baits in the area of Burg el-Arab, for example, the percentage
464 of adult males engaged in such jobs sometimes reaches sixty percent.
369 More than thirty-five out of fifty-six males constituting bait Asabei'
have a full-time or part-time job.

613 The individualistic attitudes accompanying the dependency on sal-
178 aries and living in towns and cities have their effects on the kinship
166 ties among members of these baits. With the prevalence of the individ-
464 ualistic attitudes among members of a certain bait, they become more
682 reluctant to pay their financial obligations and the Aqila finds it more
369 and more difficult to rely, for the fulfillment of the bait's financial
obligations, on the willingness of members to pay. His success within
613 the domain of the amar becomes more determined by his ability to pay
554 from his own money for those members of his bait who refuse or are un-
556 able to pay. Wealth becomes an important asset for the Aqila's per-
682 formance of his duties within the amar. When this happens, there seems
to be a certain shift in the source of political support for the Aqila.

613 In a well-integrated bait the popularity (or unpopularity) of the Aqila
554 among the other Awaqil of the amar had very little influence on his

613 position as the leader of the bait. The principle of patrilineal suc-
554 cession is so respected in such baits that it overshadows any other con-
613 sideration. This continues to be the case as long as the kinship ties
554 within the bait remain strong. When the kinship ties in a given bait
428 weaken, the principle of patrilineal succession also weakens. This is
178 more likely to occur in baits where a relatively large number of the
[166] members leave the area permanently or for a more or less prolonged period
[464] of time, seeking jobs on a part or a full-time basis. Many of these
613 members maintain only a minimal contact with their respective baits.
178 They become more reluctant to fulfill their kinship obligations, es-
166 pecially when they entail any financial liability. The older members
464 complain about how younger persons are less loyal to their elders and
561 how selfish they have become. "All they care about is their jobs and
369 the pleasure they get from the city; they are becoming city people."
Younger members, on the other hand, maintain that their reluctance to
fulfill their kinship obligations stems from their feeling that they
do not get anything in return. "Life is expensive and money is hard to
obtain. I cannot make enough money to support myself and my wife and
children and at the same time pay my cousin's financial debts," said a
member of eilat Asabei', who works as a driver with the Desert Organi-
zation in Alexandria.

613 When this happens, there seems to be a tendency toward shifting the
554 emphasis from the bait to the eila or the amar as the source of the po-
[556] litical support of the Aqila. This in turn makes wealth an important
basis of the Aqila's power. No more can the bait impose an ineffective
Aqila on the amar unless it is ready to back him by their own share of
money. If this is lacking as was the case with Shei'eb, there is nothing

The Proliferation of Segments

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occupying territory which cannot be said to belong to any particular section of their noble patron tribe, is tied to the patron tribe as such. Yet it is through the small tertiary segments that these ties are made effective. In this sense, a client tribe is a combination of small groups of people each group having specific relationships with defined tertiary sections, and participating in the tribe of their patrons through these relationships.

Secondly, clients are found distributed in small groups, sometimes no more than one or two men, but often in clusters large enough to compose a small camp. Practically all tertiary sections of the noble tribes have some clients either living with them or sharing their resources. While clients continue to reside with a particular tertiary section, it is the members of the latter who are responsible for them and vice versa. If, for example, one of the clients commits a homicide, the gathering of blood-money is the responsibility of the noble tertiary section to which he is attached, and vengeance can be exacted on any member of the noble section. In other circumstances, when the offender is a nobleman, then the clients of his group are the first to be approached for blood-money. Tied in this way to a particular tertiary section, they are not, however, compelled to reside with its members permanently. On the contrary, they may be forced to move. If, for example, there is a pressure on local water supplies, the first to feel it are the clients. Annually, they supplicate for the use of water, and if their patrons decide that there is insufficient to meet all needs, the request is refused, albeit reluctantly. Clients constitute a socially mobile group; they are the pawns in the annual readjustment of men to their resources. Whenever they move, they pass on to another tertiary section, which may be a collateral section of the one they have left or structurally far removed from it, but as soon as they leave one, their duties and obligations cease and are taken up anew with another structurally like group. It is because their attachment is to a tertiary section, and not to one of superior order, that they can be as socially mobile as they are, which in turn facilitates a more efficient adjustment to the ecological situation from year to year.

Small groups of clients move frequently, groups of adopted people less frequently, and groups composed of the free-born

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619 change their structural position only rarely. The latter change
 621 sometimes does, however, occur, and there is evidence to show
 182 that it does. For example, Agostini (1922-23, p. 323) in his tribal
 166 survey, records a section named Barsha as one of the groups stem-
 613 ming from Nasr.¹² In the genealogies I was given, the name did
 not appear, and even after some questioning, what information
 was known about it was concealed. Some time later the name
 [578] cropped up accidentally in conversation, and I was then told that
 at one time it had been one of the Nasr groups, but that after a
 quarrel during a year of water shortage, the Barsha folk went
 to live with people with whom they had maternal connexions,
 and in whose territory there was ample water that year, and
 never returned. The group, a tertiary one, was detached from the
 tertiary point of segmentation in the genealogies, and tied on to
 a tertiary group of another tribe in its new homeland.

178 To summarize briefly the argument thus far, the mechanical
 173 devices of telescoping, fusion of names, the ejection of those
 619 names which cease to be of any social consequence, and the
 621 elision of names at or around the fifth ascending generation,
 613 taken together point to the importance of the tertiary order of
 segmentation in discussing the problem of maintaining the form
 of the genealogy constant in face of its natural tendency to alter;
 further, evidence of changes (adoption into a lineage, detach-
 ment from it, the inclusion and exclusion of clients) was pre-
 sented, and this again led to the conclusion that the tertiary point
 of segmentation is critical in this respect. This being so, the man-
 [128] ner in which change actually occurs, still remains to be shown,
 and this is best done, perhaps, by discussing the mode of pro-
 liferation of tertiary segments. In order to do this adequately, it
 is necessary to say something briefly about certain features of
 Bedouin marriage.

582 Among the Bedouin there exists a preferential form of marriage
 605 between a man and his father's brother's daughter. Parallel
 cousin marriage of this sort carries with it the exclusive right of
 a man to this cousin. Without his consent no one else can marry
 her, and to attempt to do so would be to risk the marriage ar-
 rangements being nullified after negotiations had almost been

[114] ¹² Barsha's position is incorrectly given as a sub-group of Haiba; it should
 be shown as structurally equivalent to Haiba. See also note 11.

794 were concerned, there was little doubt who was leader—the
 554 name of the former was known throughout the land. Now when
 794 the warrior returned from his Egyptian exile, his rival offered
 554 him a sheep as a gift. This act was wholly appropriate. Subse-
 578 quently they continued to compete fiercely, but it soon became
 clear that the returned warrior was winning the greater support.
 [788] In the face of this, the rival, in 1948, decided to break with tradi-
 [175] tion by staying away from the annual pilgrimage to the tomb of
 the local saint. Instead, he and his followers made their pilgrim-
 age to a different tomb in the vicinity of their camp, and later
 built a low wall round the tomb, whitewashed it, and made it
 known that henceforward they would regularly use it for pilgrim-
 [613] ages. The two kinship groups of a tertiary section now had their
 [798] separate saint's tomb. Some months later, the rival decided to
 794 move with his small group to an area in which they had not pre-
 554 viously resided. It is the custom among the Bedouin when they
 578 pitch their tents in a place for the first time, that the people of
 431 the neighbourhood should bring them gifts to mark the event.
 [166] The returned warrior, who had now become a close neighbour
 of his rival was obliged, like others, to offer the latter a gift; he
 was also obliged to return the gift of a sheep that he had been
 given on rejoining his section in 1947. He brought a gift within a
 few hours of his rival's arrival, but it was a goat.¹⁴ The rival and
 his followers were furious, and the argument that the warrior was
 too poor to give more was dismissed summarily. This was the
 final insult. The donor, in return, had been given less than he had
 presented. The reciprocity of gift exchanges had not only been
 arrested, it had been reversed. From then onwards the two groups
 made no attempt to conceal their hostility and went their sepa-
 rate ways.

613 Disputes stemming from circumstances such as these are the
 578 occasions which mark the proliferation of groups, although in
 all three cases cited, difficulties over water supplies had pre-
 ceded the outbreaks of quarrelling.

613 In this discussion of the ways in which proliferation of seg-
 602 ments takes place, the emphasis had been put on the tug of war
 121 between the interests of people in their agnatic connexions and

¹⁴ A goat is inferior to a sheep in gift exchanges.

THE SEDENTARIZATION OF NOMADS IN THE WESTERN DESERT OF EGYPT

A. M. ABOU-ZEID

178 Much attention has been paid in the last few years, in both Egyptian and
657 international circles, to the question of settling the nomads of the Western
Desert of Egypt. A number of institutions (e.g. the Cairo Institute for Desert
Research and the Departments of Sociology and Social Anthropology in the
Egyptian universities) and some government departments (e.g. the Department
of Desert Irrigation, of the Ministry of Public Works) have combined
their efforts to study the economic and social situation of the semi-nomadic
clans and the possibility of creating new sedentary agricultural communities
to replace the present nomadic and semi-nomadic groups whose economy
is based on the rearing of livestock in general, and of sheep in particular.
It is the purpose of this paper to give a brief account of the main projects of
sedentarization suggested by the authorities concerned in Egypt, and to outline
their expected effects upon the economic system and modes of living, and also
to indicate the repercussions they may eventually have on the whole social
structure of the semi-nomadic clans. Apart from the planned projects, there
is a marked and growing tendency among these people, especially the younger
generation, to abandon the traditional way of life and to settle down. This
tendency is generally stimulated by the changing social conditions. The
178 • 166 tremendous hardships and the insecurity of the nomadic life, which is entirely
dependent on rains, and the increasing social and cultural contacts with the
urban communities in the Delta are the main factors influencing this change
of social conditions, thus accentuating what may be described as a spontaneous
and natural drift to settled life. Thus, an acute decline in the amount of rainfall,
which is a frequent phenomenon in the Western Desert, and the consequent
drought, famine and death of large numbers of animals will drive men to
search for a more stable means of living in which they can find the security
that is lacking in the nomadic way of life. The introduction of modern education
and the establishment of schools in the larger villages have played a great
role in changing the outlook of the people and in discrediting the traditional
nomadic values. The advent of the railway and the improvement of other
means of transport and communication have encouraged contacts with the
Delta, and more particularly with Alexandria. As a result, an increasing
number of young men migrate every year to Alexandria and get themselves
paid jobs there. Trade and commercial transactions have also been increased
with the Delta. New trade centres (e.g. El-Hammam, El-Dab'aa and Mersa
Matrouh) have grown up along the railway line at the key stations. The most
important of these centres is perhaps El-Hammam, which is the largest cattle
market in the Western Desert. Small food stores and cafés and restaurants
owned by 'native' people have been opened at these centres and in the larger

NOMADS AND NOMADISM IN THE ARID ZONE

villages and towns, especially at Mersa Matrouh which is the seat of the local government. The second world war was also influential in changing attitude and social values. Men who were employed as unskilled labourers during the war by the different combating armies became accustomed to paid jobs and to cash remuneration, which had previously been practically unknown to them. When the war ended, it was not easy for those workers to go back to the old nomadic life with all its hardships and insecurity. Some of them preferred to migrate to the Delta, while the others decided to settle down to work in the desert villages and towns as servants or as unskilled labour in the local government departments, schools, hospitals, etc. Most of the younger men now prefer to follow their example; the settled sedentary life is thus gaining ground all the time at the expense of livestock husbandry.

But important as they may be in accelerating the drift from nomadism to sedentary life, these factors fall beyond the scope of this paper and need not be discussed further in this context. We shall be concerned with the plans and schemes which are deliberately designed to deal with the settlement of the nomadic and semi-nomadic clans. But before going on to consider this problem we should like to give a brief outline of the area itself so as to establish a clear idea about the general setting, and to see the projects themselves against a background of the whole social life. This should help us to understand more clearly the motives underlying the projects and to discern the effects they may have on the social situation.

Geographers generally divide the Western Desert into three main divisions, each of which has its outstanding characteristics.

1. The northern strip which extends some 500 kilometres along the coast from the west of Alexandria to the Egyptian-Libyan border. This strip, known as the *Dera'a Bahari*, consists mainly of fertile cultivated land which extends some 20 to 30 kilometres to the south, tending generally to become narrower to the west till it almost vanishes at Sollum near the frontier.
2. To the south of this green coastal zone lies a high plateau in which are a number of depressions, the most important being the Qattara Depression.
3. The rest of the area; i.e. the extreme southern region, is real arid desert. The coastal zone is the only really inhabited and cultivated part of the desert; beyond it there is hardly any prospect for cultivation. It is also a vital centre to which the scattered clans and groups of herders come to gather round the water points and the artesian wells during the dry season when the water becomes scarce in the southern parts.

The climate of the desert varies between the Mediterranean climate to the north and along the coast, and the sub-tropical dry climate in the southern parts. The dry season is usually very warm, tending to grow hotter southwards; while the wet season, usually extending from November to March, is generally mild especially in the north. Rainfall is very erratic and varies greatly from year to year and from one place to another. But on the whole, there is more rain in the north than in the south, and in most years rain falls in the southern parts only on very rare occasions. Rain may come quite suddenly and cause torrential floods which sweep away dwellings, crops and animals alike. This is typical of the Sallum area.

According to the 1947 census, the Bedouins of the Western Desert number 68,161. Only 23,444, i.e. less than the half of the population, are engaged in